Sabbath Keeping:
Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest

By Lynne M Baab

Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

Sabbath is one of the simplest and most life-giving practices. It reminds me that God has made the world good and for me to enjoy, and that although work is a satisfying part of life, God does not expect me to be a slave to it all the time. This world, as much as I tend to think otherwise, does not rely on me to keep it going. This is countercultural and subversive. Sabbath gracefully recalibrates me away from the voices of my culture and family backgrounds that suggests I have to justify myself with 24/7 activity. Every day we need sleep, and every week we need Sabbath.

A highlight of this book is the writer’s description of what she learned of Sabbath from living in the Middle East where whole communities ceased activity and focused on rest and relationships. She explores the biblical background to Sabbath, presenting it as “one of God’s great gifts”. It is actually one of our rights as children of God, created and redeemed by a gracious God who does not require us to work to get God to love us more.

It is a practical book full of interesting suggestions from her life and people she has interviewed – outlining activities different people cease form doing and possibilities of what they focus on instead. She is careful to warn not to try and adopt all her suggestions, but to select a few and experiment to see what is helpful and life-giving.

For example, the book inspired me to experiment with Sabbath that:

- Follows the Jewish timing from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday (a full 24 hours but with space Saturday night to get ready for Sunday).
- Begins together as a family with a candle and examen prayer, and giving pocket money to the kids as part of the celebration.
- Has the computer, phone and other technology switched off.
- Avoids shopping and activities that foster hurry, stress, anxiety or compulsiveness.
- Prioritise relationships and activities that foster peace, delight, enjoyment, re-creation and contentment.
- Combines, to different degrees in different weeks: playfulness and prayerfulness.
- Is especially attentive in relationships to my family and friends.

The Sabbath is not helpful as a legalistic list of rules to which we slavishly conform, but as a loving invitation of a gracious God. It is a ‘one-size-fits-all’ prescription as a balanced, life-giving, renewing rhythm for our weeks. This is a helpful book that offers both biblical foundations and practical suggestions of how to practice Sabbath in life-giving ways – highly recommended for natural relaxers and strivers alike.


This review was originally published in Zadok Perspectives 115 (Winter 2012), 22-23.